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# THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

PART II.

BY ORSON PRATT.

ONE OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS.

IN our examinations of the Kingdom of God, in PART I, we gave *the nature and character of the King*; and also *the qualifications of the subordinate officers*. We shall now proceed to examine,

*Third.—The nature and character of the laws of adoption, or the invariable rule by which aliens are admitted into the kingdom as citizens.*

Whenever the kingdom of God exists on the earth, all mankind are required, first, to become legal citizens thereof; and afterwards, to obey strictly all its laws unto the end of their days. To become a legal citizen in the kingdom is of infinite importance; for salvation is only to be obtained in the kingdom of God. All other kingdoms or governments will be broken to pieces and destroyed, while the kingdom of God will endure for ever.

During the first century of the christian era, the servants of God preached and administered the law of adoption both to Jew and Gentile in all the world. But the nations soon made war upon them, and overcame and killed them, and destroyed the kingdom from the earth; since which time the law of adoption has not been administered until of late. The nations, remaining so long without the kingdom among them, became quite ignorant of its laws and characteristics; hence a vast number of opinions arose, and thick darkness overwhelmed all people.

The unchangeable law of adoption, however, is very clearly revealed in the New Testament, and may be easily understood and obeyed, when there are officers sent of God to administer it. This law was preached in great plainness to a very numerous multitude on the day of Pentecost. It was preached, too, by men who were filled with the Holy Ghost, and who had been commanded to commence their first proclamation in Jerusalem. The multitude to whom it was preached consisted of Jews who had come from all the surrounding nations to keep the great feast of Pentecost. They were not in the kingdom of God; but were all sinners in an unconverted state. They believed in the existence of God, and looked for a Messiah to come; but as for this Jesus of Nazareth, whom their nation had just crucified, they had no faith in him, but considered him as one of the greatest of impostors. Peter, with the rest of the disciples, commenced teaching them, proving from the scriptures of the Old Testament that Jesus was both Lord and Christ. So great were the evidences, and so powerfully did they affect the minds of that multitude, that they were pricked in their hearts, that is, they believed that Jesus was the Christ, and that their nation was under great condemnation for crucifying him, and they knew not what the consequences would be; they were filled with alarm, and enquired of the apostles in the anguish of their souls, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins*, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts ii, 37—39—41.) Here, reader, you will see the law of adoption as it was preached by the apostles at the commencement of their great mission to all nations. Here you have the example of three thousand sinners all complying with the law and becoming citizens in the kingdom of God in one day. When they came together in the morning they were all un-

converted sinners, but before the day had passed, they were converted and made Saints. In the morning they were subjects of the kingdom of darkness, but in the evening they were citizens of the kingdom of God. Whatever the law was that wrought so great a change upon them in so short a time, the same law when administered by like authority, will produce like effects in all future ages.

It will be perceived that the great congregation of sinners to whom the apostles addressed themselves, were required—

First,—To believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God,

Secondly,—To repent of their sins,

And, thirdly,—To be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

And they were promised that, after attending to these three things, they should receive, first, A REMISSION OF THEIR SINS, and, secondly, THE GIFT OF THE HOLY GHOST. But are these all the rules necessary to be complied with in order to become legal heirs of the kingdom? No; there is one more condition which the sacred historian has neglected to mention in his history of the conversion of these three thousand; but as he has mentioned it in other parts of his history, in connexion with the conversion of others, we are not left in ignorance of it. It is THE LAYING ON OF THE HANDS of the ministers of Christ for the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Faith, repentance, baptism, and laying on of hands, are the four rules of adoption. Remission of sins, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, are the two blessings of adoption which are inseparably connected with obedience to the rules. Both the *rules* and the *blessings* of adoption are the same in all ages and dispensations of the gospel. No man or woman ever entered into the church or kingdom of God on this earth, and became a legal citizen thereof, without complying strictly with these rules. Indeed, it is the only door or entrance into the kingdom. Any persons attempting to get into the kingdom in any other way are called "*thieves and robbers*," and will be punished as such. Let the reader not be startled when I tell him that something like fifteen thousand millions of the human race have gone down to their graves without complying with these rules. Do not be angry nor prejudiced when I candidly inform you that no man nor woman on the great eastern hemisphere, during the long period of more than seventeen hundred years, has been legally adopted into the kingdom of God. No person among them, from the second to the nineteenth century of the christian era has obeyed the gospel, or has been born into the kingdom. All have been aliens and strangers, and such a thing as the kingdom of God has not been known among them. Before we close our investigations relative to the kingdom of God, we shall demonstrate by the most incontrovertible evidence what we have now asserted.

FAITH being the first rule of adoption, we shall now proceed to show what faith is, and how it is obtained. The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says (Heb. xi. 1). "Faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith, in a more extended sense, is the *assurance of the mind* in relation to what has been, what is, or what will be. This *faith* or *assurance of the mind* is obtained only through evidence. It is not a *knowledge* of things, but the *belief* of things of which the mind has no certain knowledge. All belief is founded on evidence. A true faith is founded on true evidence; a false faith on false evidence. And in no case can a man have faith, either true or false, unless it is the result of true or false evidence. The greater the evidence, the greater will be the faith resulting from that evidence. Hence there are various degrees of faith, both true and false; as for instance, when Europeans first discovered America, and came back and reported the same to the nations of the Old World, they had a certain degree of faith in their testimony. When the discovery was confirmed by the additional testimony of numerous other witnesses, the faith of the nations was greatly increased: as evidences multiplied, *faith* was made perfect; so that in process of time, millions who never saw America, believed there was such a place without the least shadow of a doubt. Those who visited America obtained a perfect knowledge of its existence through the evidence of their senses.

We will now relate an example of false faith:—When the American Indians first saw the powerful effects of gunpowder, they were anxious to procure large quantities of it. They were told by Europeans, that if gunpowder were sown in the earth, it would sprout up and grow, and yield an abundant harvest. The ignorant natives believing this false evidence, purchased, at high prices, large quantities of the



supposed seed, and carefully sowed the same; but the result, like the result of all other false faiths, was disappointment. A person ignorant of geometrical reasoning may still have faith in many geometrical propositions: he believes the propositions on the testimony of geometricians, who declare that they have demonstrated to their own minds the truth of them; every additional geometrician who testifies to their truth increases his faith, yet he cannot know them to be true until he has put them to the test of geometrical reasoning for himself.

If a native of New Zealand were told by some person that light travels with a velocity of 192,000 miles every second, he would consider the statement incredible, if not impossible. If several respectable witnesses should tell him that it had been demonstrated, it might, perhaps, beget a very small degree of faith in his mind; if, still further, some of the steps of the demonstration were opened to his mind, and some of the phenomena resulting from the velocity of light were made known, his faith would become stronger; and pursuing the investigation of the evidences, he would, at length, demonstrate the fact to his own mind, and his faith would be swallowed up in knowledge.

When Copernicus asserted that the earth revolved in an orbit around the sun with a velocity of nineteen miles every second, his statements were considered visionary; but other evidences of a satisfactory nature being adduced, mankind began to exercise faith in the Copernican theory. As the evidences increased, their faith increased; and when the evidences became demonstrative, faith became knowledge.

On the morning of the day of Pentecost, the large multitude of the Jews who were assembled, considered Jesus an impostor, but after hearing the evidence of the Old Testament prophets, combined with the evidence of the apostles who stood as living witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, three thousand of them believed that he was the Son of God; the faith of these three thousand was founded wholly upon the evidences then set before them. The faith they had in this fact, was not different from faith in any other fact. The faith that Jesus is the Son of God, is the same as the faith that Solomon is the Son of David; faith in both of these facts comes by evidence, and in no other way. Devils, as well as man, believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Devils' faith is the result of evidence the same as men's; in this respect, the faith of devils and human beings is alike. But abstract faith alone can benefit no being. Devils believe that Christ is the Son of God, and tremble. Sinners may believe the same, and yet be damned. Saints may have the same faith, and yet, Judas like, become the sons of perdition; the angels of heaven may have strong faith, and yet be thrust down to hell: so that faith alone will save neither devils, angels, nor men. Faith is essential to salvation; without faith no one can be saved; no one can even repent without first having faith. If a man does not believe in the existence of God, he will not believe in his revealed laws; neither will he believe that it is sinful to disregard those laws; he will not believe himself to be a sinner; neither will he believe that he will be punished in a future state for transgressing laws which he does not believe emanated from God. Faith must, therefore, precede repentance. Before mankind can properly repent, there are several things necessary to be believed: they must believe not only in the existence of God, but in the revealed laws of God; that is, in the laws he has given against doing evil. If they believe in those laws, and compare their own conduct with them, they will perceive that in many instances they have transgressed them, and are, therefore, under the penalty of the same. They must believe that God would be just in executing the penalty of his own law, and that the law could not be sustained, or made honourable, unless justice should be satisfied. What effect, for instance, would the laws of England have, if the penalties were never to be inflicted? Stealing, robbing, murdering, and the most savage acts of wickedness, would sweep through the land, depopulating whole cities and towns; this fair island would soon be transformed into one wide scene of desolation and ruin. So if the penalties affixed to the law of God should not be executed, order, peace, and happiness, would vanish from all worlds, and naught but the most fearful anarchy, and the most direful confusion, would devastate the widely extended universe. Before sinners can repent acceptably before God, they must also believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has voluntarily suffered the penalty of the law of his Father in behalf of man. If there had been no innocent being to suffer in the stead of man, then man, having

once broken the law, must himself have suffered its penalty, or else God would have ceased to be a God of Justice. Man, having once become guilty, could not atone for his own sins, and escape the punishment of the law, though he should ever afterwards strictly keep the law; for "*By the works of the law,*" or, by obedience to the law, "*NO FLESH CAN BE JUSTIFIED.*" If a sinner, after having once transgressed the law, could purchase forgiveness by ever afterwards keeping the law, then there would have been no need of the atonement made by Christ. If the demands of justice could have been satisfied, and pardon granted, through repentance and good works, then the sufferings and death of Christ would have been entirely unnecessary. But if Christ had not suffered on our behalf, our faith, repentance, baptisms, and every other work, would have been utterly useless and in vain. Works, independently of Christ, would not atone even for the least sin.

Every man must perceive that before sinners can repent, they must believe, first, in the existence of God; secondly, in his revealed law; and thirdly, in the sufferings of the Son of God, as the only possible way by which justice could be satisfied and mercy be granted to sinful man. Faith, as before stated, in any or either of these things, comes only through evidence. The three thousand sinners on the day of Pentecost never would have enquired so earnestly of the apostles to know what they should do, if they had not believed these three things.

After the apostles had, through evidence, established *faith* in the hearts of sinners, they next taught them *repentance*, which we shall now proceed to explain. True and genuine repentance is, to cease to do evil and learn to do well, confessing past sins, with a fixed determination to sin no more. It would be of no use for a sinner to confess his sins to God, unless he were determined to forsake them; it would be of no benefit to him to feel sorry that he had done wrong, unless he intended to do wrong no more: it would be folly for him to confess before God that he had injured his fellow man, unless he were determined to do all in his power to make restitution. Repentance, then, is not only a confession of sins, with a sorrowful contrite heart, but a fixed settled purpose to refrain from every evil way.

The next step to be taken by the believing penitent sinner is to be baptized or immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, "*FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS,*" by a man authorised of God to administer the ordinance. There are three very important items in connexion with baptism which all persons should well understand before they suffer themselves to receive the ordinance. First, they should be well assured that the administrator has authority from God to baptize them. Second, they should satisfy themselves as to the correct mode of baptism. Third, they should understand the object for which baptism is administered.

It is evident that no one has a right to administer baptism unless he has been called of God, and authorized by *NEW REVELATION* to administer that ordinance, as we have very plainly shown in *PART FIRST* of this treatise. If the believing penitent sinner were to receive baptism at the hands of one who was not called and authorized, it would be a curse to him instead of a blessing—it would be a solemn mockery in the sight of God, bringing condemnation and darkness upon the mind.

Second: *Immersion* is the only mode of baptism sanctioned by the Lord. John the forerunner of Christ, baptized numerous multitudes "*in the river of Jordan.*" (Mark i. 5.) After Jesus was baptized, "*he went up straightway out of the water.*" (Matthew iii. 16.) John also baptized "*in Ænon, near to Salim, because there was much water there.*" (John iii. 23.) When Philip baptized the eunuch, "*they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.*" (Acts viii. 38, 39.) If sprinkling and pouring were baptism, John must have been very foolish to have sought out places where there was "*much water,*" and then put himself and the candidate to so much inconvenience by going down into the water, and getting their garments disagreeably wet. If a few drops, or a gill of water, sprinkled or poured upon them were sufficient, why did they go where there was much water? Why render their wearing apparel uncomfortable by going into the water? Why did the jailor and his household put themselves to the trouble of going out of their house in the darkness of night to be baptized? (Acts xvi.) The jailor, about midnight brought Paul and Silas out of the jail into his house, where they preached the word



of the Lord to him, "and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he, and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." Here it will be perceived, that they went out of the house in the middle of the night to attend to baptism. If sprinkling or pouring were baptism, how much more convenient it would have been to have had it attended to in the house where he had a good light just previously procured, instead of going out at that late unseasonable hour. The Roman and Colossian saints were "BURIED with Christ in baptism." (Rom. vi. 4. Col. ii. 12.) Sprinkling or pouring is not a *burial*, but immersion is. Jesus said to Nicodemus, (John iii. 5.) "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." *Sprinkling* does not represent a *birth*, but *immersion* does. Coming out of the element of water into a new element is a fair representation of a birth. As in the natural birth, the tabernacle of the infant is filled, quickened, and animated by the human spirit, so in the spiritual birth, the spirits of men are filled, quickened, and animated by the Holy Spirit. As the blood of the infant, derived from the mother, is the medium of the natural life, or the means by which the union of body and spirit is perpetuated; so the blood of Christ, which was shed for us, is the medium of the spiritual life, or the means by which our union with the Holy Spirit is maintained. As the embryo is immersed in the fluid element in the womb, and by this means derives from its mother the blood so essential to the natural life; so a man must be immersed in the fluid element of water, in order to derive the benefit of Christ's blood so essential to spiritual life. As the embryo must *first* be immersed in water before it can receive the quickening of the human spirit, so a man must *first* be immersed in water before he has the promise of the quickening or life-giving power of the Holy Spirit. As the infant is born, or comes forth from the watery element into a new kingdom or world of existence, so a man in baptism comes forth from the liquid element of water into the kingdom of God's dear Son, which is a new state of existence. Jesus, in the above text, sets forth the birth of the water *first*, and *afterwards* the birth of the spirit.

It is very evident from the whole tenor of scripture, that immersion is the only method of baptism. Several historians inform us, that the early christians "immersed the whole body in water," and that sprinkling was not introduced into the church until the third or fourth century.

Every believing penitent sinner should make himself well acquainted with the *object* of baptism. This ordinance was instituted "*for the remission of sins.*" John went "into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance *for the remission of sins.*" (Luke iii. 3.) After the ascension of Christ into heaven, the apostles commenced their great mission to all nations, by preaching to several thousand Jews, on the day of Pentecost, baptism "*for the remission of sins.*" (Acts ii. 38.) Ananias said to Saul of Tarsus, "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins,* calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts xxii. 16.) Baptism is not, as many false teachers now affirm, "*an outward sign of an inward grace,*" but it is an ordinance whereby a believing penitent sinner obtains a forgiveness of all past sins. By being buried in the watery grave, the old man, as Paul says, is put off with all of his deeds; by rising from the liquid element, we put on the new man, become new creatures, and should henceforth walk in newness of life. Again Paul says, "*He that is dead is freed from sin.*" If sinners would be freed from sin, let them be "*baptized into his (Christ's) death:*" and thus, by being dead with him, they become free from sin, that is, all their former sins are remitted. (See Rom. vi.)

The great majority of religious people in modern times, consider baptism as non-essential to salvation. But we ask, is it essential that the repenting sinner should be forgiven? If so, then it is just in the same degree essential that he should be baptized, for that is the condition of forgiveness; hence baptism is essential to salvation, as much so as faith or repentance. He that neglects baptism, neglects one of the conditions of salvation. "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved. He that believeth not, (and consequently is not baptized), shall be damned." Jesus never incorporated anything that was non-essential into the plan of salvation. But men should live by every word which proceedeth from his mouth. "He that saith, I know him,

and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John ii. 4.) Again, Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." "He that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings." The *commandments*, *words*, and *sayings* of Jesus, must be *kept* as well as *believed*, in order to obtain salvation. Unless baptism were essential to salvation, Jesus never would have commanded his apostles to "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." A man may be a very good man, in many respects, yet if he rejects baptism, he rejects his salvation. As for instance, Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house; he gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." An angel came in to him, and said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." "Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved." (Acts x. and xi.) When Peter had come, while he was speaking the word of the Lord to this man, and to his household, the Holy Ghost fell upon them, and they spake with tongues, and magnified God. And Peter "*commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*"

What would have been the result if they had refused to obey this commandment, and had counted baptism non-essential, like many modern churches? It is evident that not one of them could have been saved. Why? Because the angel said that Peter should "*tell them words whereby they should be saved.*" If they had rejected baptism, they would have rejected the "*words*" of Peter, which the angel said should save them. No one can be saved who rejects baptism. It matters not how righteous he may have been; though he, like Cornelius, may have given "*much alms*," and prayed much, and feared God and worked righteousness for years; yea more, though he may have attained to greater blessings than the present sectarian churches now even believe, to say nothing of the enjoyment; though he may have seen a vision of angels, and spoken with tongues by the power of the Holy Ghost; yet, with all this righteousness and great power, he can in nowise be saved if he reject baptism. Hence, *faith*, *repentance*, and *baptism* are three essential conditions preceding remission of sins. Each are equally important. These are three of the rules of adoption by which strangers and aliens may become legal citizens in the church or kingdom of God.

Since the fourth century of the christian era, infant sprinkling has been practised by a numerous multitude of false teachers. By age and long standing this great perversion of the Apostolic doctrine has become exceedingly popular, until many millions at the present day are carried away with the wicked delusion. The apostles were commanded to *teach* first, and then baptize; but infants are incapable of being taught and therefore are not subjects of baptism. Jesus commanded the apostles to preach the gospel in all the world, and said, "he that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved." Infants cannot believe the preaching of the apostles, therefore they should not be baptized. Peter commanded the thousands on the day of Pentecost to *repent* first, and then be baptized "for the remission of sins." But infants are incapable of repentance, and therefore it is a sin in the sight of God to baptize them. "Sin is the transgression of a law." Infants have transgressed no law, and therefore they are without sin. Baptism is FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS, but infants have no sins to be remitted, therefore they need no baptism. But even if infants had sins, (as some false teachers assert), they could not be remitted by baptism alone. *Faith* and *repentance* would be equally as necessary for the infant as baptism. Either of these three conditions alone, or any two of them, would not bring remission: all must be voluntarily attended to by the candidate. But the infant cannot voluntarily attend to either, therefore the sprinkling or immersion of infants does not bring the blessings promised to the penitent believer, but it brings a curse both upon the parents and the administrator. It is a sin of which millions must repent if they ever enter into the kingdom of God.

Infant baptism is no where alluded to in the scriptures: some have supposed because whole households were baptized, that possibly there might have been some infants among them; but how many thousands of households there are that have no infants. The author of this treatise has himself baptized many whole households, but among them there were no infants, nor any persons incapable of believing and repenting. The scriptures inform us that the jailor and his household, and Cornelius and his household, *believed* and *rejoiced* in the Lord before they were baptized;



hence there were no infants among them. Some again have supposed that the baptism of infants comes in lieu of circumcision; but this is only a wild vague conjecture of impostures to deceive the ignorant; for there is not the least allusion to any such thing in the scriptures. Baptism has no more connexion with circumcision than it has with the blowing of rams' horns for the demolishing of the walls of Jericho. There is no similarity between the two. Circumcision is a ceremony performed only on male infants at eight days old, whereas baptism is a burial in water of both male and female adults, who are capable of first believing and then repenting.

After the sinner has complied with the rules of adoption, so that all his former transgressions are forgiven, he should next seek after the gift of the Holy Ghost. God has ordained a certain ordinance through which he bestows this gift. He has authorized his servants to administer the Holy Spirit by the laying on of their hands in his name. For example: "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed to those things which Philip spake." "When they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized both men and women." "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) *Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* And when Simon (the sorcerer) saw that *through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given*, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." (Acts viii.) Here we have the most positive evidence to establish the divine authority of this ordinance. That *laying on of hands* is an ordinance necessary to be attended to, is clearly seen from the fact, that no man or woman, among all the multitudes of baptized believers in Samaria, received the Holy Ghost until this institution was complied with. After Paul had rebaptized the Ephesians, "he laid his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied," (Acts xix.) Among the principles of the doctrine of Christ which the Hebrew church had received, Paul mentions faith, repentance, "the doctrine of baptisms, and of *laying on of hands.*" (Hebrews vi.)

That the Galatian church had received the Spirit by an administrator is evident from the following question put to them by Paul. "*He therefore that MINISTERETH to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*" (Gal. iii. 5.)

Paul informs the Corinthian church, that both he and Timothy were made "*able ministers,*" "not of the letter," or word merely, "*but of the Spirit.*"

Though Saul of Tarsus believed in Christ, and had been repenting, praying, and fasting for about three days, he could not obtain a forgiveness of his sins nor the gift of the Holy Ghost, without a servant of God sent to minister to him both the *water and the Spirit*. Hear what Ananias says to Saul: "The Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and *be filled with the Holy Ghost*" (Acts ix.) Mark well the saying; Ananias was sent that Saul "might be filled with the Holy Ghost." Why not fill him with the Holy Ghost through his faith, repentance, prayers, and fasting? Because the Lord had authorized servants in his kingdom to minister, not the *word and water* merely, but also the *Spirit*.

We have now set forth the whole law of adoption, and the only law by which any man or woman can ever become a legal citizen of the church or kingdom of God when established on the earth. By obedience to these rules mankind become the sons and daughters of God. By neglect of any or either of these rules they can never enter the kingdom. There is no other way or plan under the whole heavens that will save men. Many try to excuse themselves from obeying this plan by referring to the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross, "*To day thou shalt be with me in paradise.*" But we have no evidence to believe the thief was taken into heaven or into the celestial kingdom of God; for Jesus himself said three days after, "Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father." Some have supposed that Jesus went directly into all the

fulness of the Father's glory, and the thief with him. But the scriptures expressly contradict this supposition. Peter says, in the third chapter of his first epistle, that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: *by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison*, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." From this we learn, that instead of Jesus going directly from the cross into his kingdom, he went to a certain "*prison*" where he found some "*disobedient*" "*spirits*" shut up, who had been there over two thousand years, or ever since Noah's flood. Jesus preached to them. Did the thief go with him? "To day thou shalt be with me in paradise." If Jesus went to preach in prison that *day*, the thief must have gone with him; hence paradise must mean a place of departed spirits, without respect to its being either a good or a bad place.

Christ, speaking of his own mission by the mouth of Isaiah, says, "He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the *opening of the prison* to them that are bound." This agrees with Peter, as already quoted. Forasmuch, therefore, as the thief had never, to our knowledge, been born of the water and the spirit, he could not, according to the words of the Saviour to Nicodemus, "enter into the kingdom of God;" but he in all probability went that day with Jesus to the old antediluvian prison among the disobedient spirits, where he had the privilege of being preached to: that he and all the rest of the prisoners "might be judged according to men in the flesh." (1 Peter vi. 6.)

If the third "*article of religion*," believed by the church of England, be true, then the thief must have gone down into hell. This article reads thus:—

"III. *Of the going down of Christ into Hell.*—As Christ died for us, and was buried, so also is it to be believed that *he went down into Hell.*"

If the thief went down into "*prison*," let every other unbaptized person beware, lest he go there too.

Since the apostles fell asleep, the simplicity and purity of the ancient gospel has been awfully perverted; its ordinances have been changed, especially the ordinance of baptism; while the ordinance of the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, has been almost universally done away. No churches, either among the Papists or Protestants, have taught all the first principles of the gospel in their proper order. By this we know they are not the church of God. God is not with them. Their sins are not forgiven them. The Holy Ghost is not given to them. And they cannot be saved in the fulness of the glory of the Father's kingdom—neither they nor their fathers for many generations past. All have gone astray—far astray, from the ancient gospel. The church of Christ never existed on the earth without inspired apostles and prophets in it, who administered all the laws and ordinances of the gospel without any variation from the true and perfect pattern. But the apostate churches now on the earth, have neither inspired apostles, nor prophets, nor any other inspired officers among them, neither do they consider them necessary; and yet without inspiration or revelation—without immersion for remission of sins, or the ordinance for the gift of the Spirit,—they have the bold impudence to call themselves Christian Churches. But they have nothing to do with Christ, neither has Christ anything to do with them, only to pour out upon them the plagues written. He has not spoken to any of them for many centuries, neither will he speak to them, only in his wrath, and in the fierceness of his anger, when he riseth up to overthrow, to root up, and to destroy them utterly from the earth.

15, Wilton Street, Liverpool, November 30, 1848.